

Oakland County Senior Advisory Council Meeting

April 11, 2022

VIRTUAL MEETING

10:00 am -12:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Cameron McClure (District #5) called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

ATTENDANCE: Secretary Martha Schlesinger (District #20) conducted member roll call and meeting attendance.

Member Attendance:

Dist	RC	Name	Dist	RC	Name	Dist	RC	Name
1	P	George Hanley	2	P	Linda Hyduck	3	E	Jerry Sowik
4	E	Carolyn Morrison	5	P	Cameron McClure	6	A	Renata Erickson
7	P	Barbara Garbutt	8	P	Norene Yuskowatz	9	V	VACANT
10	P	Carolyn Price	11	P	Howard Adams	12	V	VACANT
13	P	Sylvia Whitmer	14	V	VACANT	15	P	Dianne Bubnar
16	P	Mark Kelly	17	P	Barbara Seldon	18	E	Marsha Kamin
19	E	Royetta Ealba	20	P	Martha Schlesinger	21	A	Cheryl Cushingberry
AL	P	Rock Abboud	AL	E	Marcus Jackson			
SR	P	Pat Zawadzki	SR	P	Genessa Doolittle			

Key: **Dist** = District # (AL -Member-at-Large, SR – Staff Rep); **RC** = Attendance P – Present; E – Excused; A -Absent; V – Vacant); **Name** = District Council Member

Others Present:

Commissioner Bob Hoffman (District #2)

Leigh-Anne Stafford – Director, Oakland County Health Department

Carolyn Krause – Oakland County Community Development

Katie Wendel – AAA-1B Director of Planning and Advocacy

APPROVAL of MINUTES

Senior Advisory Council minutes for the meeting March 21, were unanimously approved with amendments: the District #10 program was not done with the speaker; typo in second-to-last paragraph of Cam McClure's comments should read "many" centers, not "may" centers. District #8 has 3 communities and they each have a senior center (Milford has its own building, South Lyon is in the high school and they each have a director, Wixom has a senior center but its schedule is run from the City Clerk's office).

COUNTY UPDATE

Director, Leigh-Anne Stafford reported on two topics: 1) County Covid update, and 2) current discussions regarding new county plans for senior services and activities.

Regarding current covid information, Ms. Stafford reported that there had been a plateau for a few weeks, but there was a small – expected - increase in cases last week, expected because of spring breaks from schools and because of the new B2 variant strain that is spreading. She also reported that a second booster shot is available in the county for those over 50 and/or immunocompromised. The county is ramping up its community events to reach the broadest number of residents interested in getting a second booster. SAC chairman Cameron McClure said that SAC officers would discuss the possibility of holding our June meeting in person (or with a combination of in-person and virtual attendance) – assuming the case load remains low, and a suitable (outdoor or indoor) venue can be found. Rock Abboud asked if given the three upcoming major holidays (Easter, Passover, and Eid) the state would be mandating mask wearing. Ms. Stafford answered that she doubted the State would be mandating mask wearing, and would leave it up to the local and county governments. However, she emphasized that mask wearing works and is an important prevention measure in large groups. Genessa Doolittle, Public Health Educator added that there are now treatments for Covid, so if one feels unwell and gets tested and is positive, they should immediately get one of the available treatments.

Regarding future senior services and activities in Oakland County, Ms. Stafford told SAC members that because seniors and senior services are so important to and in the county, she and the County Executives' Office are engaged in discussions that are looking at better coordinating and planning these activities. This would entail using some ARPA funds to create a specific county-wide Senior

Services Coordinator position in the next fiscal year, which would be responsible for coordinating and linking all Oakland County senior activities and plans. SAC will be kept apprised of the discussions as they proceed.

County Development Officer Carolyn Krause added that a 'Senior Fest' event is also being planned, and is envisioned as a picnic-like fun day, not an event with lots of speeches. Members of the Community Development team will be responsible for implementing the plans for the event. Current efforts are focused on trying to identify possible dates and venues.

Ms. Krause also shared an update on the progress of the Blueprint and reported that the Executive's Office is part of each of the work groups that will steer the Blueprint's development and implementation. Comments from SAC members included a reminder by Barbara Seldon (District# 17) that seniors often have mobility issues and the working groups may want to consider more than one location for their meetings; and a request from Linda Hyduck (District #2) that senior centers be given a lot of lead time when work group meeting dates are announced, so the centers can have time to arrange for transportation for those interested in participating. It was also requested that information regarding an approximate start-and-end date timeframe, as well as anticipated length of working group meetings, be made available to SAC members as soon as possible to help them recruit individuals to participate in the meetings.

LEGISLATIVE/AAA 1B UPDATE

Katie Wendell shared updates on the following:

The State Budget process is underway and AAA-1B is watching it closely. Both House and Senate budget proposals are due soon. Once AAA-1B receives them, Katie will provide an update to SAC.

Activities regarding the newly adopted Blueprint are ramping up: lists of participants for each working group are being developed, and Ms. Wendel has a list of commissioners and which senior centers are participating. Currently it is as follows:

Quality of Life Working Group

Commissioners:

Nelson
Moss
Lubes
Charles

SAC Members:

Cameron McClure (District #5)

Dianne Bubnar (District #15)

Housing/Volunteer Working Group

Commissioners:

Kowal

McGillivray

No SAC members yet

Basic Needs Working Group

Commissioners:

Cavell

SAC members:

Marsha Kamin (District #18)

- Senior Centers involved to date are Independence Township, OPC, and Troy.

Ms. Wendell will send a sample letter with standard language about the Blueprint, the working groups, and other more specific information about the project to Pat who will share it with SAC members so they can accurately communicate with their respective senior centers. It was suggested that the letter's tone read more like an invitation to participate than a business letter.

BLUEPRINT UPDATE

SAC Chair Cam McClure reported on an extensive phone conversation he had on issues related to seniors in Oakland County with Commissioner Kristen Nelson (District #5), who chairs the Healthy Aging/Blueprint subcommittee.

Part of their discussion was about Deputy County Executive Rudy Hobbs and County Health Officer Leigh-Anne Stafford attending a meeting at which a PowerPoint presentation was shown about what the Executive Office does for seniors. The meeting discussed the Blueprint for Healthy Aging in the county and led to a decision to create a County Department (or Commission) on Seniors, although no decisions have yet been made on specific timing, structure, or staffing. Late April is the targeted time for the working groups to convene their first meetings. The individual working groups then will determine their own meeting schedules.

SENIOR CENTER DASHBOARD

SAC member Sylvia Whitmer (District #13) presented the idea of creating a Senior Center Dashboard which would contain in-depth information about all of the senior centers in the County as well as general senior demographic information. As Cam McClure has often pointed out, there is a wide diversity in the size, funding, programs, and impact of senior centers and senior programs throughout districts in the county. Especially now, with the creation of The Blueprint and the availability of ARPA money, in order for the county to wisely and appropriately allocate ARPA funding, those differences need to be known to best support senior services and activities. As Mrs. Whitmer reported, the only information that currently exists on SAC's list of senior centers is a center's address and the name of the director and SAC representative.

A Dashboard – which would be developed by a subcommittee of SAC members that would meet over several months - could provide information on the size of the senior population in each district and the percentage of the general population; the amount and sources of current operational funding; what local support is available and/or currently accessed (such as millages, grants, and private contributions); what, if any, By-Laws each Center has, and what kind of leadership structure and functions exist; and other categories of information that would be instructive to both SAC and the County.

During the extensive discussion that followed Mrs. Whitmer's presentation (and supported the creation of a Dashboard), the following points were made: Rock Abboud (At Large) – at the macro level, The Blueprint is about identifying the unmet needs of seniors in Oakland County, and there should be concern that if funds now available are not used they could be lost; Carolyn Morrison (District #4) - the effort to meet Oakland County's senior needs is being led by the County Commissioners, and as they have not yet finalized their short-term and long-term choices, it is important to get them as much information as quickly as possible.

A subcommittee of a few SAC members will be convened to create the outline for the Dashboard and its information categories. It will then be sent to the senior centers for their input and feedback. Someone on Carolyn Krause's team will be responsible for collating and inputting the information that SAC members gather for the Dashboard. Chairman McClure asked any SAC member interested in serving on the Dashboard subcommittee to contact Pat and himself.

DISTRICT UPDATES

Sylvia Whitmer (District #13) reported that in West Bloomfield there is a group looking for a new physical space for the senior group to meet. They have visited sites in eight districts to gain first-hand information on all aspects of space usage and activities. The lease on the site in the Orchard Mall that had been used for meetings expires on May 31, 2022. The West Bloomfield Council is currently working with architects and the Parks and Rec Department to expand that building for future senior use. But for now, the group needs a place to meet for at least one year. Moving into a school site is one short term possibility.

Rock Abboud (At Large) – NEXT has housed their activities in a school since 1995 without any written agreement, and use about 1/3 of the school's space. The City of Birmingham has passed a resolution to get a long-term written agreement for the use of the school and will actively seek citizen support for such an agreement. He urged that all seniors need to make their voices heard on securing adequate space for senior activities and programs.

Linda Hyduck (District #2), whose Commissioner Bob Hoffman was attending this SAC meeting, reported that Springfield Township has only limited senior outreach and occasional activities. Highland Township is more connected to the township and has a small building for activity space, but it doesn't have much parking. November is the projected timeline for reconnecting with the township's facility. Current activities include social, health, and fitness activities, meals on wheels, and zoom meetings. She reminded SAC of the need for regular reliable legal services for seniors, and their ongoing need for help with chores and services at home.

Barbara Seldon (District #17 and part of #21) represents three areas: Southfield, Lathrup, and Oak Park. She reported that 19% of Southfield residents are 65 and over; covid assistance has been very thorough in all 3 cities. Currently the search is on for places for senior activities, and for senior and veteran living facilities. The former Northland Center is being converted into living spaces, including some for seniors, and there are condos for seniors being developed at 9 Mile and Lahser. Instead of building new community centers, existing buildings and facilities will be converted for community activities (including one facility with a pool). The Scribe magazine lists lots of community activities – even without facilities – and will increase its coverage of senior activities in the future. Southfield is a great place for seniors to live, with many independent living facilities. The senior population is growing and its needs are being prioritized.

Dianne Bubnar (District #15) – in March there was a successful even to introduce new people to OPC (Older Persons Commission). 17,772 people signed in at the building for programs and there were 270 new members. A musical will be presented soon, and in June the annual “Walk for Meals” event is being planned. OPC is funded by millage, but additional monies are raised so there is no shortage of meals and no waiting list. She will bring copies of their newsletter to future SAC in-person meetings.

Norene Yuskowatz (District #8) – reported that part of the district has no designated senior space, but they have a newsletter and classes. Milford has its own facility and has a veteran’s luncheon scheduled for June 1.

Carolyn Price (District #10) – reported that there is a new mayor in Pontiac, who is very receptive to seniors needs, and the city will either build or find a new facility for senior community activities. They have had great success with: exercise sessions; healthy cooking classes (with tastings); starting a gardening class; a 10-series lecture series with the Oakland County Health Department; an inaugural woman’s health luncheon program that had almost 90 attendees, and will become an annual event; and attorneys regularly come to volunteer their time to assist residents.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman McClure and vice-chair Barbara Garbutt reported to SAC members that due to the county’s new redistricting, there will be two fewer districts in the county beginning at the next election in November 2022. This will impact SAC numbers so a subcommittee will be created to review and revise the current by-laws to align with the new districts. SAC members affected by this redistricting can apply to serve as At Large SAC members if they wish to continue to serve. Ms. Garbutt suggested that a By-laws subcommittee could meet in person at the West Bloomfield Library. She anticipates 2 to 3 meetings.

Chairman McClure reported to SAC members that county commissioners are talking about taking a bus tour to visit senior centers across the county to get a firsthand view of what each center has and needs. He will keep SAC posted on developments.

Rock Abboud suggested that holding senior(citizen)-to-(high school) senior conversations would be a good way to build intergenerational relationships and understanding within communities.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 11:58 AM

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY May 16, 2022

10:00am – 12:00PM

VIRTUAL MEETING